

Enterprise, Ore.  
December 27, 1962

General Services Administration  
National Archives and Records Service  
Washington 25, D.C.

Gentlemen:

I am preparing a history of the pioneer roads of the Blue Mountains of Eastern Oregon, and find that it would be very desirable to secure the following information, which is not available locally:

Stages were put on the road into Wallowa County, with contracts to also carry the mail, first in 1879. This contract is presumed to have been in effect until 1882. The name of this contractor is ~~not known~~ and the point of departure in the Grande Ronde Valley is not known for sure. Some say Summerville and some say Union.

The next contract was a contract from 1882 to 1886 and was by F.D. McCully and John Ladd. Again the point of departure from Grande Ronde Valley is in question. The terminal point was Joseph for both contracts.

The next contract was from 1886 to 1890, the contractor who carried the mail and operated the stage is said to have been a man named Griffith. Point of departure again in question.

After 1890 the stage and mail was carried from Elgin to Joseph. The railroad having been built into Elgin that year, and records are complete here for those years.

Will appreciate any information that you can dig up for me in the matter.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Gerald J. Tucker.  
P.O. Box 372  
Enterprise, Oregon.



# GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

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*National Archives and Records Service*  
Washington 25, D.C.

January 8, 1963

IN REPLY REFER TO: NCRE

Mr. Gerald J. Tucker  
P. O. Box 372  
Enterprise, Oregon

Dear Mr. Tucker:

Your letter of December 27, 1962, requested information concerning mail service in Oregon.

The records of the Post Office Department in our custody relating to mail routes west of the Mississippi River are incomplete. We do not have any records concerning Oregon mail routes, mail contracts, or mail contractors for the period 1866-1918. It is possible that the information you seek may appear in the Congressional Documents, copies which are often available at the State university libraries or at the Oregon Historical Society of Portland.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane F. Smith".

(Miss) Jane F. Smith  
Chief, Social and Economic Branch  
Office of Civil Archives



Enterprise, Oregon.  
January 11, 1963

Dear Bernal:

Perhaps you can help me to find out a matter of history as it effects Wallowa County. I would like to find out just where the first stages left Union County for the Wallowa country. The first stage to Wallowa County began in the fall of 1879 and came up through the Wallowa Canyon. The next year the bridge was finished and the road improved and the stages came through regularly. No stages operated over the Smith Mt. road and bridge.

Now the question which I get conflicting answers about is, was the point of departure from Union County at Summerville or Union? Perhaps the stages at various times came from both places. It is known that the horseback mail came through from Summerville in the 70s. It would seem more logical for the stage route to have been from Union down the east side of the valley, since Union was the county seat during most of that time.

Perhaps you might find out from some of the Pioneer Association members. I have so far only secured opinions from pioneers over here and they are divided as to Summerville and Union. I have written to the Federal Archives at Washington D.C. to check on the mail contracts, but they may not be able to answer the question. After the railroad came to Elgin, of course, the stages operated out of Elgin.

Hope you folks had a very happy Christmas, and best wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Gerald Tucker  
P.O. Box 372  
Enterprise, Ore.



Elgin, Oregon  
January 15, 1963

Dear Gerald:

Sorry not to have been home when you were by. Try some more. Part of the time you can find me. Carmi said that you planned to stay with your father. That would be very good for him.

If you have some Wallowa history projects you are working on, I might have some notes that would be helpful, as I interviewed about 30 old timers when I was working on the Elgin history ( and took notes on what the said) and then again while compiling the Union County History I also accumulated some information.

As to your question of the origion of the Wallowa county stages before the railroad to Elgin, I do not know if I have anything real definite. My opinion would be they came from and through Summerville.

However the east side of the river was a logical route and I am quite sure that it was used in fur trader days. Partly because of the old wrotted bridge that was near the overhead in the 1860s. I think this was the place that was fixed to cross with pack horses so they would not have to swim their horses in the spring high water and get their furs wet.

On April 10, 1873 (3) the post offices of Island City Indian Valley and Wallowa were established. This would indicate that at that time this mail rout was being started.

There was a continious hassel over the location of the county seat and in 1874 it was moved to Union from LaGrande. In 1872 Samuel Hannah was elected state senator. He was a Union merchant. In that session he got a bill passed to relocate the stage rout across the mountain by way of Summerville, which put Summerville and Union on the main line and LaGrande off on a side line. The rout cut across the valley and it was during this time that the post offices of Slater and Sandridge had their brief existance in the middle of the valley. After a few years the road washed out on the west side of the mountain and stages again went by way of LaGrande.

Bill Knight says he helped his father in 1878 build a bridge at Fish Trap Ford (Elgin) and a short time later one at Rinehart (The Morelock Bridge) Bill was born in 1865. Martha Russell stated that they fed stage passengers at their place after the bridge was built. She was Ned Morelock's daughter born in 1866 and the lived on the Hill and Roberts place. She stated that her father's place was a regular stage stop. This between Summerville and Wallowa. This would be quite conclusive.

As I recall in some of my notes there is an account of a young Twilliger who carried the mail to Wallowa and forded the river at Rinehart. He took the diptheria as I remember about 1877.

Well, Had better stop this and get it in the mail.

Bernal



Enterprise, Ore.  
January 19, 1963

Dear Bernal:

Thank you for your recent letter. You gave me some of the answer to points that hold the key to the question as to the starting point of the stages that operated into Wallowa County. A lot depended on when the bridge was built near Pinehart and I searched the Commissioner Journals both here and at LaGrande without success as to that point. I take it from your letter that the Morelock Bridge was built in 1878, the same year that the Fishtrap Bridge was built. Is that correct?

I received an answer two days ago from the National Archives and Records Service, and they do not have the records of Oregon mail routes, mail contracts, or mail contractors, for the period 1866 - 1918. They state that such records may be in the Congressional Documents, and referred me to the University of Oregon Library or the Oregon Historical Society. I will investigate further from that angle.

The facts that complicate the question are these; from Dec. 19th, 1864 Summerville was on the direct stage line of the Thomas and Ruckel Road, until the end of 1868. From then until 1874 Summerville was without stage connections. During the summer of 1874 the main east-west stage line operated via. Tollgate and the newly completed Woodward Road through Summerville. This change was brought about by Mr. Hannah, who was also an employee of the Northwestern Stage Co., and was all tied in with the County Seat battle. The stage line across via. Tollgate and Summerville was operated only that one summer and until sometime during the next winter when snow became too deep on that road and the Company switched back to the Emigrant Road. Tollgate route was not used again as a stage route. In 1880 at the first of the year a new contract was let to operate stages over the Thomas and Ruckel Road, this was of course a four year contract, and Summerville was



again on a main line stage route during 1880 and until just before Christmas in 1882. The week before Christmas of 1882 was the great Umatilla River flood and all bridges on the Thomas and Buckel Road were washed out, besides numerous sections of the grade along the river. The road was never reconstructed by the Toll Road Company after that. However, the first class mail was carried by saddle and pack-horse between Bingham Spring and Summerville, until the end of 1883, at which time the mail contract expired. Summerville was never again on a main line stage line after the end of 1883.

Now, I feel sure that there is no question that the Wallowa stages operated out of Summerville for the occasional trips made during the fall of ~~1879~~ 1879, and the following winter, the bridge at the mouth of the Minem was finished in the summer of 1880 and stages ran regularly after that. It would seem that the stage would logically have operated out of Summerville until the end of 1883, at the expiration of the contracts.

For the next contract period, I am not so sure. It would not seem logical that the point of origin would be Summerville, which had no main line connections. Perhaps it might have been LeGrande, which Mr. Max Wilson of Joseph, seems to think is the case. Some other old timers of Wallowa County think they recall that their folks rode the stages direct to Union to the County Seat to transact business during the years 1884 until Wallowa County was created Feb. 11, 1887.

So, if you run across any information that might clear up this uncertainty, I would surely appreciate it.

Best Regards,

*Gerald*



Wallowa County  
Stage

Elgin, Oregon  
Jan 21, 1963

Dear Gerold:

Received your letter this morning. Looked up my old notes of an interview with Bill Knight Dec 16, 1957. Here is statements: "I helped put the first bridge in at Fish Trap Ford (Elgin). It was in the spring and the ice was starting to break..... I am not sure of the date, but it might be 1879 .... I helped on the Morelock bridge, probably the year after the Elgin Bridge. The mail was carried on horse back ~~at~~ before the bridge was built. John Twiliger was carrying mail when he took diptheria in 1877 and died.

"In 1877 I was at the Morelock crossing when Cap. Whittle forded in on his way to Wallowa. (he describes this)."

From Martha Russell's notes of Jan 6, 1957:  
"My father, Henry Rinehart and Ferris Wade built the first Morelock Bridge in the early 1870s, I don't remember the exact year. Afterwards we lived on the Jim Roberts place and my father kept stage station. The stage from Grande Ronde to Wallowa stopped. It went across northeast to the Dacon Place for the next stop, and then to Graham's place in the Wallowa Canyon for the next stop.

"The first bridge across the Grande Ronde River at Elgin was built in 1878 by Andrew Knight, his son William and others (she gives a description of crossing the structure and describes it)"

Chas Hill, April 1960: "When I was 11 years old my folks desided to move to Oregon. On May 1, 1881 we left.....It took us until June 19th to reach Union County.... Wm Park and father bought ~~the~~ a place from Ned Morelock".

You state that the staged operated across Tollgate over the newly completed Woodward Road in 1874. Are you sure this was not the old Linkdon road. According to the best I could figure out the Woodward road onto Phillips Creek and to Summerville was built in 1879 (Jesse Hindman says 1880) Grandad describes going this rout in the fall of 1879. Was there an older road on this route?

Maybe this hash of stuff will help a bit, maybe just help confuse you. Any way here it is.

Bernal

Your father's notes of 1957: "Minam... ~~Frank Stubblefield~~ and A C Smith and McRees built a bridge there in 1875..."